



## **5-Year Plan (2008-2013)**

# **Palouse Conservation District**

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### **Organization of the Palouse Conservation District**

The District is a political subdivision of the State of Washington with authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08. The District was established in 1940 and is currently led by a locally elected and appointed Board of Supervisors. The volunteer five-member Board is joined by Associate Supervisors, staff and other volunteers to carry out District activities.

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### **Function of the Palouse Conservation District**

To make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

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### **We Serve & Why**

The District provides its programs and services to the landowners/managers within its boundaries to maintain both a productive land base and a healthy environment.

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### **Mission of the Palouse Conservation District**

To actively assist current and future generations of land managers (rural & urban) in implementing conservation practices by providing educational, technical, and financial assistance.

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### **Vision of the Palouse Conservation District**

A productive land base in harmony with the environment, as well as a profitable agricultural industry that supports thriving communities. Sustainable and responsible urban growth. Clean air, clean water, quality soil, and healthy, well-managed wildlife populations. Citizens aware and informed on conservation issues.

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### **Values of the Palouse Conservation District**

The following values guide our work:

- Wise use of natural resources to balance production with conservation.
- Local people making local decisions to achieve conservation.
- Honor private property rights.
- Quality education and technical assistance.
- Voluntary approaches over mandatory regulations.
- Local people with access to a responsive & responsible government.
- Efficient and effective use of public resources.

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### **Resource Conditions**

- Most of the streams in the District are on WA Dept. of Ecology's 303(d) List as water quality impaired.
- Most of the cropland in the District is classified as Highly Erodible Land (HEL) that without conservation measures in place can experience annual soil erosion rates of 10-20 tons per acre.
- The primary deep water aquifer, the Grande Ronde, is in decline.
- Air quality issues such as agricultural burning continues to be a concern for Pullman residents & others.
- Urban stormwater runoff continues to be a concern as well.

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## **Natural Resource Priorities and Goals:**

- **Conservation/Livestock Planning & Implementation** - By 2013, 50 district-sponsored, conservation/livestock plans will be completed or updated within the district, resulting in 100 new BMPs installed; there will be an outreach effort to assist 10 small acreage landowners with their natural resource concerns.
  
- **Soil Quality – Infiltration and Erosion Control**  
**Goal:** Through 2013 on a yearly basis 20% of land users (rural & urban) have changed their management practices to increase water infiltration and decrease soil erosion in the South Fork of the Palouse River Watershed; there will be a 25% increase in acreage using direct seed methods and a 15% reduction in tons of soil erosion by monitoring; promoted stubble mulch till through the EQIP program, and reduced plowing or promoted uphill plowing by publishing 10 newsletter articles and by participating in the Local Work Group.
  
- **Water Resources – Quantity and Quality**  
**Goal:** By 2013, PCD will have completed the WRIA 34 watershed planning process (surface water, ground water, in-stream flows, storage) leading to 15% of the projects for increased water quantity and quality being implemented; implemented 20% of the North Fork River Water Quality Improvement Plan's (TMDL) activities listed to increase water quality; developed partnerships with 2 other entities on projects that address urban storm water runoff which benefit water quantity and quality issues and address flood control; participated in the City of Pullman's storm water management plan; implemented 2 pilot projects to reclaim storm water runoff and put to beneficial use; held 3 community workshops and educated 1,000 volunteers on water quality issues; provided cost share for water conservation practices (i.e. xeriscaping) each year; promoted water conservation for all urban and rural development by holding 5 community education workshops and featured in 10 newsletter articles; and continued participation in the Palouse Water Summit and WRIA 34-Palouse Basin Watershed Planning
  
- **Land Management/Land Use Issues – Rural & Urban**  
**Goal:** By 2013, PCD will have promoted the State Farmland Preservation Program through education and by giving input to the FPP Task Force, will have monitored the number of conservation easements written each year, will have monitored the number of acres farmed each year and will have lobbied for economic incentives to encourage acreage to stay in farmland; will have made available cost share for reseeding native species and increased education on vegetation and noxious weed control leading to a reduction in the number of citizen complaints to the county and cities; held 4 public workshops on land management for small acreage landowners. PCD will have provided input and had a positive effect with county, municipalities, and agencies on comprehensive plans for land use; held 5 public workshops and published 5 newsletters featuring Low Impact Development principles.
  
- **Air Quality**  
**Goal:** By 2013 PCD programs will have contributed to maintaining the current PM-10 standard for air quality by continuing to serve as the permitting agency for the Department of Ecology's Burn Program. PCD will partner in research that investigates methods for improving air quality.

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### **Critical Geographic Areas:**

South Fork and North Fork Palouse River Watersheds will be the primary focus of our efforts with the Snake River Watershed being secondary.

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### **Information – Education Priorities and Goals:**

- **Conservation Education Goal:** By 2013, we will have reached 50% of PCD population regarding the conservation services, information, and technical assistance available through the PCD – utilizing publications, newspaper, radio & television public service spots, and personal contacts.

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## **District Operations Priorities and Goals:**

**Goal:** Conduct effective and efficient operations in order to maximize benefits to both the people and resources within the District.

**Goal:** Build District capacity to provide programs and services to the people and the resources within the District.

**Goal:** Pursue partnerships and coordination with other entities to strengthen District programs and achieve common goals.

**Goal:** Pursue program and operational sustainability.

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## **Trends Impacting Conservation in the Palouse Conservation District**

The following trends have been identified and are important to understand as we serve our land managers:

- Increase in smaller land owner operations
  - Less full-time farmers
  - Conservation tillage is increasing – e.g. mini-till to no-till
  - Farms increasing in size causing less attention to each field – production oriented more so than conservation
  - Cleaner air and water; improvements have been made
  - Tighter profit margins for farming / agricultural
  - Increase urban pressures & political landscape – City of Pullman and housing developments
  - Development continues in flood plains and wetlands perpetuating the problems
  - Cluster residential developments in the County are on the increase
  - Increase in regulatory actions by agencies and/or third party lawsuits
  - Decrease in traditional funding sources for district
  - New Farm Bill and meeting the WTO regulations
  - Trend toward saving the family farm but no one knows what the family farm really is
  - More people moving out in the rural land base that do not understand the rural lifestyle
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## **Strategies to Address Trends**

- Small farm planning on a “fee basis” – would address livestock and manure issues, weeds, resources, ponds – utilize Natural Resource Coordinator and Natural Resource Technician positions
  - Work with commissioners on booklet for small land parcel owners – consider a county and city ordinance/covenants requiring a conservation plan on small farm / animal operations (define)
  - Consider Assessment authority for the district to offer increased services and products
  - Education program of urban citizens on rural living including private property rights
  - Contract tree sales and tree planting
  - Developing the conservation plan template, practice guides and guidelines – pasture management –
  - Be the intermediary between state government and land owners – water issues, AFO-CAFO, burn permits – local assistance – be recognized for this service & education
  - Access to cost share for land owners
  - Conservation planning for large operations – and assistance with Farm Bill programs – e.g. CSP
  - Water quality monitoring – developing baselines and determining where the water quality impacts are
  - Continue to sponsor the watershed planning programs and activities and gathering the stakeholders together
  - Provide a “sounding board” for people to discuss resource issues in Palouse CD to raise the awareness and involvement in resource issues – small cities, landowners, rules, regulations
  - Provide technical assistance to landowners for practice application – coming from the watershed plans
  - Technical consultant on “fee basis”
  - Be the mitigation agent for highway development – negotiate a contract for providing services with DOT
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## **Staffing Needs**

Six full-time and one part-time employee will conduct District business:

- District Manager
- Natural Resource Technicians (3) – farm planners, burn permit, GIS, water quality monitoring, urban planner (LID), small parcel planner
- Education Coordinator
- Administrative/ Financial / Grants / Secretary
- Engineer – Part time

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### Annual Budget Needs:

Salary & Benefits \$350,000  
Equipment \$15,000  
Office Supplies \$10,000  
Programs & Cost Share \$500,000  
Rent & Utilities \$18,000  
Transportation \$8,000  
Training \$15,000

**Total Annual Budget Need: \$916,000**

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### Key Decision Makers

- Governor
  - Legislators
  - Commodity Groups
  - County Commissioners
  - City Councils
  - Environmental Groups
  - Landowners
  - Partner Agencies
  - WSCC
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### Priority Actions – 12 Months

- *Enter a summary of the priority actions needed to start the 5-year plan of the XYZ Conservation District based on the above information.*

Action	Begin Date	End Date
(See FY11 Annual Plan of Work)		

**Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices**